

# ISO 19600 – guidance for operational compliance management

Establishing a sustainable  
standard in corporate compliance  
with ISO 19600

ISO 19600 was rolled out in December 2014 and serves as an international standard and global benchmark for compliance programs. Corporate compliance in the workplace still remains one of management's highest risk concerns. Therefore, it is not surprising that organizations continue to assess their compliance programs against such a recognized standard. The implementation of a robust compliance and ethics program on the basis of values and appropriate risk has helped companies to maintain integrity and, essentially, reduce non-compliance issues.

## The ISO 19600 compliance management system guidelines

ISO 19600 is based on the principles of effective governance, proportionality, transparency and sustainability. It is designed to provide guidance for establishing, developing, implementing, evaluating, maintaining and improving a compliance program. These guidelines apply to varying types of organizations, irrespective of size, industry, risk exposure or global reach.

## What approach should companies take when considering ISO 19600?

ISO 19600 outlines the minimum guidelines and standards that should be in place for a compliance program to be effective. The standard does not target a specific risk area; it does, however, provide guidance on how organizations can improve their comprehension of compliance programs currently in place. There are four simple steps:

- ▶ **Plan:** identify compliance obligations and compliance risks, and re-evaluate current stance in order to develop a strategy to define and measure any possible issues arising
- ▶ **Implement:** introduce monitoring mechanisms to establish measurement within the business
- ▶ **Review:** assess the compliance management program on the basis of the implemented controls, and measure the findings
- ▶ **Revisit:** monitor and examine cases of non-compliance on a consistent basis

## The challenge of complying with international standards

Despite the significant range of regional standards, international standards and industry-specific regulations, there has been an increasing coordination of efforts on compliance standards over the past few years. ISO 19600 builds on the recognized

compliance initiatives of several international organizations and combines them with the well-known ISO standards for management systems. It provides detailed guidance for businesses either wanting to implement a compliance management system or benchmarking their existing program against a standard. The ISO 19600 framework applies to general compliance and risk-specific management objectives, focusing on areas that include anti-bribery, anti-corruption, anti-trust, fraud and misconduct.

### Benefits of following ISO 19600

ISO 19600 has a number of benefits:

- ▶ Providing guidance on why an organization should take a fresh look at the compliance programs currently in place
- ▶ Demonstrating to regulators that the organization seeks to be in line with the latest compliance standards
- ▶ Following a risk based approach with compliance obligations being the basis for establishing and implementing controls. As a result, all organizations can benefit, no matter the size industry or sector
- ▶ Aiming to create an organizational culture and values in which compliance efforts become widely accepted
- ▶ Incorporating critical elements of other accepted standards in a flexible, simplified approach

ISO 19600 is adaptable to the size, nature and complexity of each organization's business activities. Broadly speaking, organizations can adopt the international standard as stand-alone guidance or combine it with already existing management program standards (e.g., ISO 9001, quality management).

ISO 19600 provides an effective understanding of how to establish a long-term and sustainable compliance operating model. With just four steps, it provides the flexibility needed for individual localization of the compliance standard.

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EYG no: 010934-18Gbl

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